WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

VERMILLION EYES

NATHAN SCHIFF

FILM, VIDEO & TELEVISION REVIEWS

"EYES DOWN FOR A FULL MASK".

<u>Starring: JOHN SMIHULA, SUZZANE DERISON, KAREN CRAVITZ, BARBARA BALMER, CINDY LACRECA.</u>

Well, it's been a hell of a long time coming, but here it is - a new Nathan Schiff film. But was it worth the wait?

The story, basically, follows the life of a man obsessed by death; he stops and films car-crash and suicide victims, dreams and daydreams about death and killing and his whole life seems to revolve around death and dying. He's also the most unlucky, or lucky as far as he's concerned, man I've ever seen - in the space of the film's setting he witnesses more deaths and recently deceased bodies than a pathologist on overtime. He sees a girl throw herself under a train, a woman with a kid in a pushchair get hit by a hit and run driver, finds two fresh car-crash victims in separate incidents and stumbles across another fresh stiff in the woods, no wonder he's so fixated with death!

Anyway, our man starts off obsessed with the sight of death and dead things, but gradually that's not enough and the act of killing is the next stop on his slippery slope of depravity.

All the way through the growth of his obsession another need has featured heavily, another factor - Sex, women and sex. He dreams of making love with a beautiful woman and he pays women just to talk to him about things. He also finds himself lusting after a woman who later is the victim of the hit and run and his daydreams take over. The ideal thing would be to combine the two things most on his mind and he finally gets the chance with the lifeless corpse he finds in the woods. It's not a rotted stiff, like "Nekromantik", but a fairly well preserved female body that's just about to start decomposing. He seizes the moment. Just as he does a young girl comes across him and his rigid partner. Seeing what's happening she runs, with him closely following, onto a railway line and is killed.

The first death directly caused by his morbid fixation, but definitely not the last, for now he's experienced death as the cause and not strictly as an observer he's got the taste and a bloody killing spree follows.

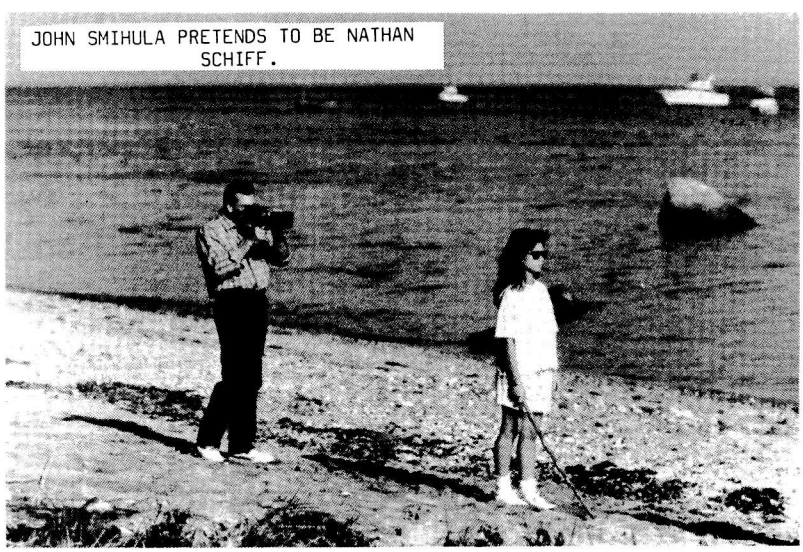
"VERMILLION EYES" is without a doubt Nathan Schiff's most professional film to date. The production values are far higher than in his previous masterpieces. Some people would say that's a bad thing, as that was part of the charm of his earlier work, but believe me it hasn't lost that side of it, it isn't and doesn't look like a million dollar epic. It's cheap and seedy and very basic, but that just adds to the realism and whole feel of growing obsession and menace. In being "low-budget" it has the look of the street, God that's cliche! Without the polish of Hollywood.

On the down side "VERMILLION EYES" is a little too long - the print I saw was 120 minutes and the editing is slightly choppy, but I guess that was a rough-cut so who am I to say. As for you gorehounds out there, you won't be at all disappointed there's some really gruesome murders and even some nasty dismemberment, a kind of Schiff hallmark. Yes, the blood flows quite readily near the end and any film with necrophilia can't help but appeal to the more greedy sleaze addicts among you.

The obvious comparisons to "Nekromantik", I suppose, have to be drawn, but they are not dwelled on for long as they are two completely different films that just happen to feature, loosely, the same subject. "VERMILLION EYES" reminded much more of "Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer" because of the scheme of events and the filming technique used.

On the whole an interesting and entertaining film that deserves more than the fate of Nathan's other work. It'll never come out in the U.K., but I expect you guessed that anyway.

All I can hope is that his next movie doesn't take as long as "VERMILLION EYES" has, and it doesn't even have a distributor yet. Though I don't think it'll be very long, judging by Nathan's comments in his letters, let's hope not! A definite thumbs-up from this editor, and thanks a million Nathan for giving ITF the world exclusive. Chalk one up for the little man. Make that two! Don't you forget "NEKROMANTIK II", will you?



JOHN SMIHULA PRETENDS TO BE NATHAN SCHIFF.